

(3) The Bible is the only infallible rule of faith and practice; we must go to it for our authority in all religious matters. The final authority in religion is not the Church, although that is the teaching of Roman Catholicism; nor is it human reason, although the Rationalists would have us think so; but the final authority for Christians in all matters of belief, and of conduct, is to be found in the Holy Scriptures. The exaltation of the Church to the place of authority in religious matters developed the unfortunate and wretched condition of things which prevailed through many centuries before the Reformation. Men did not go to the Scriptures to discover what the will of God was, nor what they should believe, nor how they should conduct themselves toward their fellow-men; but they looked to the Church to tell them; and the best Christian was the man who yielded blind obedience to the authority of the Church as it was represented to him in the parochial priest. The exaltation of human reason as the final authority in religion has developed a materialistic philosophy, which has flowered out into the unbelief and selfish materialism of the present day, and which makes religion a matter of humanitarianism and patriotism. The unspeakable condition now prevailing in Europe is due in no small measure to the subjection of the authority of the Bible to that of human reason. Men cannot depend upon what they find within themselves, either individually or in an organized capacity, for the true statement of the things which we should believe about God and eternal life, or for the right rule of conduct in our dealings with each other. These are things which God has made known to us in the Holy Scriptures. If you wish to know what to believe, and what to do, study the Bible.

(4) The Bible is the source of comfort in the afflictions and sorrows of life. It is here only that we can learn of the true character and purpose of God—that He is a God of love, and our Father, and that His will concerning us is always good. It is the Bible which tells us that God "doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men"; it is in the Bible that we learn the words of Christ, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest"; it is here also that we learn to "know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose."

It is impossible to estimate the value of the Bible to the human race. We cannot conceive what a vacuum it would make in the history of the human race were the knowledge of this book and its influence upon men entirely withdrawn from human experience. The Church is what it is, and owes whatever influence it has had for good in the world to the possession and study of God's Word. What it means to the individual Christian we can only discover by talking to the saints of God. I remember to have heard Dr. Theodore Woolsey, ex-president of Yale College, say in a public address that he loved the Greek New Testament so well that he sometimes wished that he might be able to take it to heaven with him. What does the Bible mean to you in your daily life and experience?

"Holy Bible, Book Divine,
Precious Treasure, thou art mine."

Go, breathe it in the ear
Of all who doubt and fear,
And say to them,
"Be of good cheer!"

—Longfellow.

THE SUNDAY SCHOOL

REVERENCE OF JESUS FOR HIS FATHER'S HOUSE.

Jan. 28, 1917.

John 2:13-22.

Golden Text: "My house shall be called a house of prayer."—Matt. 21:13.

One of the things to be noticed about our Saviour's life upon earth was the care with which he attended all of the public services of God's house. We frequently read of his going to the synagogue on the Sabbath, and he seems to have attended all the feasts in Jerusalem during that time. The visit by Jesus, with the incidents connected with it, which constitutes our lesson, was not mentioned by any of the other gospel writers, who gave almost nothing in regard to the first year of our Saviour's public ministry. When Jesus visited the temple on this occasion, he found in it those who were engaged in merchandising. We must remember that the term "temple" was used in two distinct senses. One was applied only to the temple building, the other included all of the temple grounds, and this is the sense in which the term is used here. It is not probable that even the greedy, selfish Jews would have allowed this business to be transacted anywhere else about the temple than in the court of the Gentiles, which was the outside court. But that was considered holy ground. The rabbis taught that "None could go through the court of it (the temple) with his staff and shoes and purse, and dust upon his feet, and that none could make of it a common thoroughfare, or let any of his spittle fall upon it." The animals which were offered for sale there were to be used in sacrifice. Many of the Jews coming long distances from home could not bring their sacrifices with them, and so they were accustomed to purchasing them in Jerusalem. And in the making of money offerings it was necessary, to use only Jewish money. So foreign money had to be exchanged for Jewish. This accounted for the money changers being there. No doubt these traders at first carried on their business outside of and near to the temple, but, thinking that they could succeed better within the temple courts, they induced the priests in some way to permit them to come within the sacred precincts, no doubt paying them very liberally for this privilege. This gave them the opportunity of demanding exorbitant prices for what they had for sale. When our Saviour saw the use to which the temple was being put, he naturally became very indignant. This is one of the few times in all of his earthly history where he showed great indignation or dealt with even apparent harshness with anyone. This is not usually classed among his miracles, and yet the fact that any one man could face the multitude of traders, backed as they were by the priests and surrounded by the greater multitudes of people who had come to the temple to worship, would dare to drive out from the temple those who were desecrating it, is one of the most remarkable evidences of his miraculous power which we have given us in all the gospel history.

Notwithstanding his indignation, we should notice that he was so merciful to those who were violating God's law that he did not inflict upon any of them any loss. He drove out the sheep and oxen with those who sold them, but these animals could easily be collected and driven to other places by their owners. The tables

of the money changers were turned over, but even if there was money upon them it could easily have been gathered up again. He told those who sold doves to carry them out, for if he had turned them loose they could not have been recovered.

The disciples were greatly impressed by his action, and they saw that it was due to his reverence for the temple, and they remembered the prophecy from the 69th psalm which is here quoted, and which told of his zeal for his Father's house. The Jews seemed to have made no effort to prevent his carrying out his plan for cleansing the temple, but demanded of him his authority for doing so. They recognized the fact that he was right in saying that this business should not be carried on in the sacred precincts of the temple, but they did not like his exercising the authority which upset their plans, and would deprive them of the revenue which they were probably receiving. Jesus did not directly reply to them, and yet in reality claimed divine power and right for what he had done. He said to them: "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." The Jews supposed that he referred to the temple building and told him that it had taken forty-six years to erect that building. This was the third temple that had stood on that site, and the building of it was started by Herod the Great about twenty years before the birth of the Saviour, and was not completed for many years after his death, but it was probable that at the time of which we are studying building operations had temporarily ceased.

Jesus was not referring, as they supposed, to the temple building, but to his own body, the temple of his soul, just as our bodies are called temples of the Holy Ghost. In this statement he bases his claim of being the Messiah upon the resurrection of his body three days after his death. That statement does not seem to have made much impression upon the disciples when he uttered it, but after his resurrection they remembered it, and so it often was with his teachings during his public ministry. They did not understand this meaning until after his crucifixion. The same thing is true today. Preaching and teaching often seem to have no effect upon those who hear, yet the truth finds lodgment in the heart and will be remembered at unexpected times, frequently in the far distant future, and will be the means of awakening the heart and conscience. There are a great many people who say that it is not worth while to require children to commit to memory passages of the Scriptures and the catechisms of the Church which they cannot understand. If these truths are stored away in the mind, the time will come when they will understand them and when they will prove very valuable.

Jesus' indignation contrasted with ours. The irritation which we so often feel, the exasperation which lacerates and rends the heart, the bitterness of which we are ashamed—all these were absent from Jesus' anger. His wrath was the hottest ever known upon our earth, but the heart in which it burned was sinless. Our anger is frequently a manifestation of our selfishness. We become indignant over trifles. The street car does not stop, or somebody carelessly knocks off our hat, or a servant disappoints us; and we are all aflame. Our comfort has been molested, our rights have been entrenched upon, our dignity has been affronted, and we are downright mad. Ravelings and shavings can set us blazing. But in the presence of gigantic outrages perpetrated on the helpless and the weak some of us are as calm as a summer

morning. But men do not make us angry unless they interfere with our own personal affairs. If they wrong others we will make excuses for them.

Our indignation, then, is quite different from that of Jesus. His anger never had its root in selfishness. When men abused him, he was unruffled. When they lied about him, his pulse-beat was not quickened. When they nailed his hands to the cross, no trace of anger darkened in his face. His calm lips kept on praying, "Forgive them, for they know not what they do." It was when he saw his brother-men abused that his great soul rose in wrath. The more helpless the person who was mistreated, the hotter was the fire of his indignation. Against rich people who imposed upon the poor, and against clever people who took advantage of the ignorant, and against the strong people who mistreated the weak, and against crafty people who laid traps for the innocent, his soul blazed with a heat which became an imperishable and awe-inspiring memory in the apostolic Church.—Condensed from the "Character of Jesus," by Charles E. Jefferson.

The great lesson to be learned from this passage is reverence for the house of God. There was a time when there was a deep solemnity on the part of the congregations as they gathered in the house of God. They walked in quietly and rarely spoke at all, and then only with bated breath, and when the service was over, they went away quietly and solemnly to their homes. The outward form of reverence, however, is not all that is needed. Many a man today carries his oxen and sheep and money changing into the house of God just as really as did those merchants of old. When their minds and hearts ought to be occupied with the worship of God they are filled with the thoughts of their business and plans are being made which are to be carried out during the days of the week following. We once heard of a man who said that he always enjoyed going to church Sunday morning, because it gave him such a quiet hour in which he could make the plans for his business the next week.

"The whole transaction is a remarkable one, as exhibiting our Lord using more physical exertion, and energetic bodily action, than we see him using at any other period of his ministry. A word, a touch, or the reaching forth of a hand are the ordinary limits of his actions. There we see him doing no less than four things: (1) Making the scourge; (2) driving out the animals; (3) pouring out on the ground the changers' money; (4) overthrowing the tables. On no occasion do we find him showing such strong outward marks of indignation, as at the sight of the profanation of the temple. Remembering that the whole transaction is a striking type of what Christ will do to his visible church at his second coming, we may get some idea of the deep meaning of that remarkable expression, 'The wrath of the Lamb.' (Rev. 6:16.)

"The fact that the profane custom which our Lord here reproved was resumed by the Jews, and that two or three years afterward our Lord found the same thing going on again in the temple, and again cast out the buyers and sellers, ought not to be overlooked. It is a striking proof of the desperate wickedness and fallen condition of the priests and rulers of the temple. They were deaf to all counsel and reproof, and given over to a reprobate mind. The difference between our Lord's language at the second visit and that used at the first, ought also to be noticed. At the first visit he only says, 'Make not my Father's house a house of merchandise,' a place of buying and selling. At the second